DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 247 327 UD 023 674

AUTHOR Anderson, Nancy; Rodriguez, Orlando
TITLE Conceptual Issues in the Study of Hispanic Delinquency.
INSTITUTION Fordham Univ., Bronx, N.Y. Hispanic Research Center.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Mental Health (DHHS), Rockville, MD. Center for Minority Group Mental Health Program.
PUB DATE 84
GRANT 2-POI-MH-30569-06A1
NOTE 9p.; For related documents, see UD 023 675-676.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (120)
JOURNAL CIT Hispanic Research Center Research Bulletin: v7 n1-2 p2-8 Jan-Apr 1984

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acculturation; Crime Prevention; *Delinquency Causes; *Hispanic Americans; Social Control; Social Science Research; *Social Theories; *Urban Youth
IDENTIFIERS *Avoidance Behavior

ABSTRACT

This article examines the delinquency literature to determine how factors identified as influencing delinquency actually operate among Hispanics. In light of the fact that Hispanic youth with similar socioeconomic levels to Blacks engage in delinquency at lower rates than Blacks, the article also tries to explain how Hispanic adolescents living in a high crime area such as the South Bronx in New York City manage to avoid delinquency. Four theories--the social control theory, the opportunity structure theory, the social disorganization theory, and the crime deterrence theory--are examined to determine their applicability to Hispanic delinquency and to consider how they may be modified to reflect the life circumstances of inner-city Hispanic adolescents. Throughout, the discussion indicates how the little knowledge available about Hispanic inner-city delinquency, as well as findings of the Hispanic Research Center's exploratory fieldwork in the South Bronx, necessitates extending conceptualizations of delinquency. Finally, the article examines how acculturation, a key factor in Hispanic life, is interrelated with other factors associated with delinquent behavior. (CMG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED247327

RESEARCH
BULLETIN
HISPANIC RESEARCH CENTER
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY
BRONX, NEW YORK 10458

JANUARY - APRIL 1984 Vol. 7, No. 2

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF HISPANIC DELINQUENCY

Nancy Anderson

Orlando Rodriguez

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Lloyd Rogler
Hispanic Res. Ctr.
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

UD023674

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF HISPANIC DELINQUENCY

By Nancy Anderson, formerly of the Hispanic Research Center, Fordham University, and currently of the Court Employment Project, Inc., New York
and
Orlando Rodriguez, Research Associate, Hispanic Research Center

This article assesses the relevance of delinquency theories to the situation of Hispanic inner-city adolescents. The research literature on delinquency indicates that minority adolescents living in inner-city areas are at greater risk of engaging in delinquency than adolescents living in more affluent areas. (1) But there is little systematic information about the factors leading to Hispanic delinquency and crime. Quantitative studies of adolescents have been oriented to comparisons of black and white differences in delinquent behavior. (2) In these studies Hispanic inner-city youth do not appear to be adequately represented. Ehtnographic and in-depth case studies have concentrated on inner-city populations, but with few exceptions — most of which focus on Mexican Americans (3) — they examine primarily the survival strategies of black youth. (4) Thus, in this article we examine the delinquency literature to determine how factors identified as influencing delinquency actually operate among Hispanics.

While the literature identifies poor and minority youth as being at higher risk of engaging in delinquency, Aiken and associates (5), as well as Mancini (6), suggest that in high delinquency areas many adolescents actively manipulate their environment to avoid situations leading to delinquency. Dembo and associates (7) point out, however, that the non-delinquent adolescent has received little attention as a subject in his own right; that samples where non-delinquents are used primarily as control or comparison groups yield little information about non-delinquents; that the focus on low socioeconomic status and troubled family relations as causes of delinquency does not satisfactorily explain why some adolescents with such attributes resist delinquency; and that studies to date have provided few insights into the interpersonal dynamics of avoiding delinquency. This focus is particularly appropriate in studying Hispanic delinquency because our exploratory research (see article by Rodriguez, Burger, and Banks in this issue) indicates that Hispanic youth, with socioeconomic levels similar to blacks, engage in delinquency at lower rates than blacks. Thus, another objective of this article is to examine delinquency theories in order to develop explanations of how Hispanic adolescents living in a high crime area such as the South Bronx manage to avoid delinquency.

UD023674

We review the applicability to Hispanic delinquency of the main theoretical traditions in the delinquency literature and consider how these may be modified to reflect the life circumstances of Hispanic adolescents in inner-city settings. We review social control theory, as recently developed by Elliott and associates in their integrated model of social control (8); the opportunity structure approach (9); the social disorganization approach (10); and deterrence theory (11). In our discussion, we indicate how the little knowledge available about Hispanic inner-city delinquency, as well as the findings of the Hispanic Research Center's (HRC) exploratory fieldwork in the South Bronx (see article by Edelman in this issue), necessitate extending existing conceptualizations of delinquency. We finish our discussion by suggesting how acculturation, a key factor in Hispanic life, is interrelated with other factors associated with delinquent behavior.

Social Control

The social control model stresses the importance of the control exercised by parents, schools, and other agents of social authority in the restraint of adolescent behavior. Control theory seeks out those conditions that release the youngster from the constraint of conventionality. In its simplest form, once the youth is so liberated he will engage in delinquent activities. Poor interaction with family members or a poor school or employment record, therefore, acts as a cause of delinquency insofar as the absence of social bonds that such institutions purportedly provide allows the individual to be freed from the demands and constraints of conventional society. (12) In the model, the locus of poor social bonds to conventional authority rests in adequate socialization in the family and the school. As proposed by Hirschi (13), the model makes a sharp break with other delinquency approaches. First, the model asserts that there is no particular relation between economic class and delinquency. Second, the theory represents a sharp break with the Chicago school tradition of "cultural transmission" associated with Sutherland, Shaw and McKay, and Thrasher (14), where the belief is that youngsters in particular neighborhoods learn delinquent values and skills through social values and norms already existing in the neighborhood. (15) Thus, social control theory asserts that motivations for delinquency emerge from deficiencies in parents' ability to socialize the child rather than from the transmission of "delinquent cultures."

Social control theory has received direct support from the research of Hindelang, Elliott and Voss, Elliott et al., Wiatrowski et al., and others. (16) Sykes and Matza (17) propose a softer version of control theory in their concept of the "neutralization technique" whereby youngsters could, on occasion, free themselves from the normative constraints of the conventional order. This argument does not require proof that a delinquent's norms are distinctively different from those of more law-abiding peers, situations and contexts as providers of the occasions and resources that shape the particular delinquent act to be explained. Because it is based on a large representative sample of youth, Elliott et al.'s research (18) particularly lends support to the social control perspective by their finding that a negative orientation towards agents of conformity and control, particularly family and school, is strongly associated with delinquency. But this orientation leads to delinquency most strongly when acting in concert with a positive orientation toward delinquent peers. The combination of peer and family/school orientations is the best predictor of delinquency. This finding thus lends support to the relevance of differential association as a factor in delinquency. Elliott et al. stress that their research reinforces an "integrated model" approach to delinquency where inputs from social control, opportunity and learning theories (or cultural transmission) are critical.

Because of the emphasis given in the integrated model of social control to the social bonds the adolescent develops with the family and his peers, it will be useful to discuss Elliott et al.'s findings in greater detail, and submit them to the scrutiny of available knowledge about Hispanic inner-city life. Bonding to the family is cited by Elliott as crucial for the occurrence or avoidance of delinquency. The more favorably oriented a youth is to his family, the more time he spends with them, and the greater his intimacy with family members, the less likely he is to be delinquent. Our exploratory research in the South Bronx (see article by Edelman in this issue) indicates that existing conceptualizations of family bonds are not completely applicable to the social situation of youth and their families in the inner city. Elliott's and other approaches assume that adolescents deviate from a homogeneous conventional orientation on the part of families. Our observations in the South Bronx, in agreement with those of Moore et al. (19) in Mexican American areas of Los Angeles, indicate that families of adolescents vary in conventionality. Adolescents may have strong attachment to families where adults have extensive crime and criminal justice experiences. Such youth may be involved with delinquent peers and have the greatest involvement in delinquent activities.

Delinquency research has long em-

phasized the importance of peer interactions in the genesis and function of delinquency. A closer look at this research, however, reveals that there are different views about the structure or behavior of the peer group. (20) For Miller (21), the youth group reflects the values of lower-class culture; for Cohen (22), the delinquent gang is explained in terms of reaction formation, rejection of middle-class norms resulting from the inability to live up to them. For Cloward and Ohlin (23), gangs create illicit opportunity structures for teenagers cut off from legitimate equal opportunities. Criminal, conflict, and retreatist type gangs each appear in response to the particular confluence of legitimate and illegitimate opportunities available in specific lower-class communities. Whatever their differences, each author takes as self-evident that delinquency is a group tradition, a claim made as early as the 1920s by Thrasher who surveyed 1313 Chicago "gangs." (24) To be in a gang was to be a delinquent.

In the 1960s social scientists began to reconsider the nature and function of the delinquent gang. (25) For example, Yablonsky argued that specifically delinquent gangs are not formally organized, structurally delineated entities, in which all members are delinquent, but rather loose collectives of adolescents who do not enforce standards of delinquent activity. (26) Padilla, remarking on Puerto Rican youth groups, notes, "These cliques manifestly have both recreational and defensive purposes. The individual is protected from loneliness and assured of loyal friends, while he is also protected from the aggression of others." (27) This research suggested that without distinctive structure and modal norms and conduct, the meaning of delinquency as a gang phenomenon becomes problematic. Thus, the stress in the social control perspective on variables that bind the individual to socially acceptable behavior, regardless of his economic or ethnic identity, or his belief in group-derived delinquent values. The binding element consists of the attachment to and interaction with other peers who engage in delinquent activity. The greater the attachment or the greater the number of peers who engage in delinquency, the greater the likelihood of involvement in delinquency. However, as represented by Elliott et al. (28), the integrated model of social control has not entirely elucidated the meaning of the group nature of juvenile delinquency. It does not hold to the rigid gang model popular in the 1950s, since the critical variable in the integrated model is peer interaction, a more elastic concept. Orientation to delinquent or conformist peers in concert with orientation to family is postulated to best predict delinquency. Yet, even with this more interactionally sophisticated model, it is unclear just what behaviors and group dynamics characterize peer groups that contain serious or chronic delinquents.

Our exploratory study of the South Bronx indicates that there is a constellation of contextual and behavioral elements that confront the inner-city minority youth. Primary among them is the general perception of potential danger and violence in everyday life, in the neighborhood and at school, as well as familiarity with delinquent peers, whatever one's delinquent status. Edelman's observations indicate that many adolescents have intimate friendships with delinquent peers without themselves actively participating in delinquent activity. In the South Bronx, the non-delinquent or non-serious delinquent may consider a heroin dealer to be his best friend, but not engage in the sale or use of heroin. The interaction groups that were observed show little uniformity in their power to enforce such group norms as may be recognized; membership is constantly changing, and the group's recognition of leadership is problematic. It thus appears that other motives, for example, the need for protection in an environment characterized by unpredictable violence, and feelings of solidarity with neighborhood peers, are involved in the interaction between delinquent and non-delinquent. Peer interactions may provide rationales for some individual's delinquency, but only when combined with street orientation in the adolescent's family or when other inadequate life circumstances lead to weak attachments to conventional families.

While exploratory, these observations of youth in the South Bronx question the applicability of existing conceptualizations of peer interaction in explaining delinquency. The observations suggest that the nature of peer interaction where serious delinquency is found remains a "black box" for researchers and that much closer attention must be paid to what peer-group interaction consists of in the inner-city neighborhood.

Opportunity Structure

The opportunity structure model highlights inequalities in the social, economic, and educational structures that serve to deprive certain youth of the means to legitimately achieve socially valued goals. Following Merton's classic formulation of the problem (29), delinquency is thought to be an illegitimate means to achieve socially prescribed ends. Cloward and Ohlin (30), the major developers of this model, further assert that, given the motivation for delinquency arising out of the socially stratified structure of opportunity, the learning of delinquent orientation and skills is accomplished in the context of delinquent peer interactions.

Part of the debate over the importance of the stratified opportunity structure has centered on the presumed relationship between class and delinquency. Studies relying on census data and aggregate arrest data have found a clear relationship between socioeconomic position and delinquency. (31) Strassberg's study of violent delinquents in Manhattan, Westchester, and Mercer County, N.J. (32), lends support to the claim that the degree of harmfulness and the frequency of delinquent acts are related to ethnicity and, by inference, to social class position. Wolfgang et al. (33), using census data, find a strong link between race (black) and lower-class membership and seriousness and frequency of delinquency in Philadelphia. Survey studies relying on self-reported delinquency measures have generally found no relationship between class and delinquency. However, Elliott et al. (34), using a detailed questionnaire for delinquency self-reports, finally concede that the incidence and frequency of delinquent acts are inversely associated with class membership.

In considering the impact of inequality on delinquency, some opportunity structure theorists have emphasized social-psychological aspects—the adolescent's reaction to his socioeconomic position—rather than how different aspects of socioeconomic structure are related to delinquency. It is useful to consider both the nature of inequality and the social-psychological reactions to it.

Social-psychological explanations of delinquency based on the opportunity structure model focus on the concept of strain. Strain theory defines the significance of social opportunity structures in terms of social psychological measures of the perceived nexus between an individual's aspirations and expectations of achievement. Belief that one's aspirations cannot be realized because of internal or external barriers is thought to provide the impetus for delinquent behavior. One variant of this argument is Cohen's "reaction formation" thesis. (35) Cohen argues that lower-class childen are least likely to live up to middle-class aspirations. Reaction to such imminent failure is manifested by the rejection of conventional behavior in favor of delinquency where "success" is more likely to be achieved through the deliberate inversion of middle-class behavioral criteria. Research testing this hypothesis indicates no direct effects of strain on delinquent behavior. Elliott et al. (36) find that such "strain" has an indirect impact on delinquency, through its influence on bonding to family and school. Others have argued that strongly held middle-class aspirations on the part of lower-class youth are associated with conformity, not delinquency, and that it is the youth with few middle-class aspirations or few adult role model caretakers who are most likely to be delinquent. (37) From a different angle, Greenberg observes that when making sense of adolescent aspirations (ages 16 and under) it must be conceded that aspirations pertaining to

adulthood are often vague or unrealistic. (38) The gap between aspirations and their achievement potential should not be deemed criminogenic until late adolescence or early adulthood. Thus, the research indicates that strain must be taken into account in explaining delinquency, but only in conjunction with the effects of other social-psychological and structural factors. Furthermore, we question whether the concept can be automatically applied to Hispanics and other immigrant groups. Part of the immigrant experience is the internalization of the value of economic success as defined in industrial society and of the means by which to achieve it. Thus, it is necessary to take into account the immigrant family's behavior in the process of acculturation. We will return to this point below in our discussion of acculturation.

In its focus on social-psychological reactions to inequality, the classic opportunity structure model has paid little attention to the nature of socially structured inequality. More recent studies have paid greater attention to the multiple aspects of socioeconomic position and their interrelationships with other factors associated with delinquency. The elements of the class/economic system and the social status system exist as long-term structural characteristics that may be recognized by research subjects or not, but which, nevertheless, have causal and temporal priority in determining the basic elements of our social order. As such they constitute the framework within which individuals' and groups' lives can vary. Among these elements are labor market structure, the existence of poverty and long-lasting inequality, and the persistence of a hierarchy of life chances associated with racial and ethnic group membership.

Two related aspects of the reconsideration of opportunity theory are the development of the concept of the "segmented" labor market and the distinction between the stable working class and the truly poor. (39) Political economists have propounded a theory describing the American labor force as divided into primary and secondary labor markets, with the possibility of moving from the secondary to the primary labor market being narrowly restricted. (40) Within the secondary labor market are located ill-paid, low-skill, dead-end jobs such as dishwashing, car washing, and unskilled labor in factories, restaurants, and other industries. Few, if any, fringe benefits are associated with jobs in this sector. (41) Rarely can adults occupying such jobs facilitate employment opportunities for their offspring through social or workplace connections. So, too, secondary labor market jobs are often intermittent, i.e., periods of employment are interspersed with periods of idleness. Since the two major groups of Hispanics — Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans — are found in large numbers in this segment of the labor market, it is clear that an examination of Hispanic delinquency must pay attention to the relationship between delinquency and placement in the secondary labor market. Abundant documentation of the salience of the secondary-labor market perspective is contained in the writings of Smith and Thompson, and Thompson et al. (42).

Within this framework, the impact of school attendance and employment on delinquency should also be considered. For some, school attendance and achievement are rational accomplishments in terms of adult occupational aspirations. For others, school is a place to "do time," and according to our research, a place to do crime until graduation, expulsion or dropping out. School may command either the adolescent's loyalty, in which case delinquent involvement will be lessened, or command only his time and presence, in which case delinquency may become more common. (43) Juvenile employment will have different force, we hypothesize, depending upon the adolescent's age. For younger teenagers, bonds to family, school, and peers should be more important, whereas for older teenagers economic responsibility in conjunction with social control constraints should be in force. So too, for older teenagers, access to primary or secondary labor market jobs should show up in patterns of delinquency avoidance, especially as the modal crime for older teenagers is robbery. (44) If available jobs are not sufficiently attractive, they may not provide real alternatives to crime for inner-city youth.

Another aspect of opportunity structure relevant to the life situation of Hispanic adolescents is access to illegal opportunities. In their formulation of opportunity theory, Cloward and Ohlin (45) posit that youth may also have unequal access to illegitimate opportunities. Certain neighborhoods may afford the adolescent a greater chance, for example, to make an economic success in robbery or theft. Access to adult "fences" — disposers of stolen goods — is important if property crime is to become a regular source of illicit income. Edelman's research suggests that for many South Bronx teenagers their "first job" consisted of stripping plumbing fixtures from abandoned buildings and selling them to local merchants. Numbers running is another common form of adolescent criminal employment. Control over drug-trafficking, especially at wholesale levels, may be, as Ianni (46) reported, dominated by different ethnic and racial groups at different times. Ethnic succession in conventional areas of organized crime could impact upon juvenile delinquency, although major drug distributors appear to be a less common feature of South Bronx neighborhoods than other parts of New York. The question of how illegal opportunities may be distributed among inner-city neighborhoods remains unexplored in delinquency research. It may be that illegitimate opportunities are determined by access to targets which are not present in all neighborhoods: local factories or warehouses, or contiguity to more affluent areas. In such cases, the nearness of relatively more affluent households and well-stocked merchants may serve as a delinquent opportunity. Access to illegitimate opportunities must be considered in conjunction with other neighborhood characteristics such as the social disorganization of poverty areas (47) — transiency, high rates of crime, alcoholism, and other problem behaviors among adults. Together with illegitimate opportunities, these neighborhood characteristics may have a direct impact upon the propensity of some adolescents to join with other delinquent peers.

Crime Deterrence Theory

The classic utilitarian philosophy of crime deterrence provides another important element for consideration. Basic to this perspective is the idea that each individual weighs the consequences of his actions against his self-interest and performs a cost-benefit calculus before acting. By increasing the law-enforcement presence and the legal punishment for delinquency, juvenile misconduct should be controlled or reduced. One study of the social control import of juvenile beliefs about criminal law asserts that juveniles are discouraged from criminal involvement when they perceive that the juridical consequences of crime become more severe with increased age. (48)

Although it is certain that much serious delinquency goes unreported to police and courts, still many youth are arrested and appear in court each year. During 1980 35.8 per 1000 youths under 18 in New York City were arrested for the commission of Index offenses (49), but even these figures do not immediately show the impact of official detection on the deterrence of youth crime. For example, in New York State, a person is defined as an adult at the age of 16, but under certain circumstances may be tried in criminal court as an adult at the age of 14, or may be treated as a "youthful offender" until the age of 19. From a deterrence perspective, it must be asked exactly how do arrest and court appearances have a measurable impact on the delinquent careers of Hispanic or other adolescents. Wolfgang (50) finds the critical distinction in his research to be between youth who were arrested once or twice and "chronics," those who were arrested more frequently. Another possibly critical distinction is between youth never arrested and those arrested at least once. The recognition that the chances of coming to official attention are contingent and situational and the court's final disposition of the case may have little to do with the initial misbehavior. This makes understanding the impact of law

enforcement on delinquency all the more problematic. In this regard, the process of "aging out" and its opposite, the "chronic" or career delinquent, should be assessed in terms of the impact of official detection and sanction for Hispanic youth.

In counterpoint to deterrence theory, the labelling perspective provides critical considerations for the study of Hispanic delinquency. Sociologists have pointed to the contingent nature of police/citizen encounters and have demonstrated that simple knowledge and suspicion of criminal behavior are not sufficient conditions to explain police decisions pertaining to arrest. (51) Youth dress, demeanor, the proactive or reactive nature of police work, as well as citizen pressure for or against arrest, play important roles in the police officer's decision. These considerations introduce the possibility that differences in arrest rates between black and Hispanic youth may simply reflect police decisions about different demeanors that youth of different ethnicities display before police and court officials. While this hypothesis is speculative, it demonstrates the need for research to focus on Hispanic and other minority youth's perceptions of the risk of arrest, trial and punishment associated with specific delinquent behaviors and upon the documentation of the contexts and structures of police-juvenile encounters. Such data would help elucidate the meaning of the "social reality" of juvenile crime in an inner-city area and improve the ability to stipulate the contrasts between self-reported data on delinquency and official statistics on youth crime.

The opportunity structure model also presents some implications for deterrence theory. A more sociological version of the deterrent model asserts that individual choices are influenced by the socially determined costs and benefits available to him. (52) The deterrence of delinquency may be better effected by increasing not the costs of delinquency, especially in the real world where the likelihood of apprehension for anything less than homicide is statistically slight (53), but by increasing the benefits of conformity. (54) This could be accomplished by making available real educational and economic options for "at-risk" youth, thus also tempering some of the stress associated with deprivation and adolescent status. Tangible rewards may be monetary or take the form of an increase in "human capital" training. The punishment or latent cost in this approach derives from the setback to youth educational or employment plans attendant upon arrest or incarceration after the commission of a serious delinquent act, as well as the possible shame he might feel for "blowing it."

Social Disorganization

It is well known from official statistics and self-reports that serious delinquency is more concentrated in poor urban areas than in more affluent ones, and that most delinquency is a group phenomenon. This information turns inquiry toward a study of other neighborhood characteristics that may be associated with risk of youth crime. (55) Suttles suggests that "the social and cultural conditions of urban slums may have a different significance for delinquency than conditions elsewhere." (56) Similarly, Elliott et al. state:

> We believe there is empirical justification for the position that the adolescent peer group is often the only stable social organization in areas characterized as socially disorganized and the adolescent groups in these areas frequently have a delinquent orientation.(57)

Nevertheless, research on social disorganization leaves unclear what characteristics of poor areas constitute social disorganization and how these are related to delinquency. For example, ethnographic studies like *Street Corner Society* (58), *Tally's Corner* (59), and *A Place on the Corner* (60) make it clear that many urban slums are not utterly disorganized and that the social and behavioral dimensions of economic deprivation and ethnic discrimination take many forms. Social disorganization studies originating with the Chicago school established the tradition of linking poverty to disorganization, but the general truth of this position can be challenged. Social disorganization, while empirically associated with poverty, may be operationalized as concentration of a particular ethnic population; length of residence; quality of housing stock; institutional stability and responsiveness; levels of anonymity; and indigenous neighborhood leadership in terms of community ethnic and self-help organizations. (61) Such leadership, it is hypothesized, can mobilize community residents to act for obtaining resources to facilitate neighborhood improvement and to constrain delinquent behavior. (62) The absence of such neighborhood organization and the type of anomie and insular behavior that it engenders are well delineated in Suttles' study of a Chicago neighborhood. (63) The lack of legitimate opportunities and the absence of social control may be the effects of social disorganization. However, research on the effects of social disorganization in specific communities tends to be based on census-type data which do not quite reflect those neighborhood characteristics comprising social disorganization. Thus, research on Hispanic delinquency needs to be particularly sensitive to indicators of neighborhood organization and their variance. We hypothesize that neighborhood characteristics, such as the extent of indigenous community organizations and leadership will have a direct bearing on peer interaction and that the greater the degree of social disorganization in a neighborhood, holding other things constant, the greater the incidence and frequency of serious delinquency.

Acculturation

Acculturation is of critical importance in considering Hispanic delinquency. Acculturation refers to a complex process whereby the behaviors and attitudes of the immigrant group change toward the dominant group as a result of contact and exposure to a cultural system that is significantly different. Although earlier twentieth-century criminological theory gave a good deal of attention to cultural conflict and assimilation difficulties as explanatory factors in delinquency among European immigrants (64), the concept has received little attention in recent decades. However, because the Hispanic population in the United States consists largely or first- or second-generation immigrants, acculturation can be expected to play an important role in delinquency.

Acculturation has been used to describe such diverse behaviors as the generation of migration, recency of migration, familiarity with the host language, factual knowledge of the host society, interaction with persons belonging to the host society, and value orientations such as ethnic pride and identification with the cultural heritage. (65) We hypothesize that acculturation indirectly influences delinquency through its effects on socialization and strain. Acculturation plays a complex role not only because of different possible interrelationships with other factors, but also because its dimensions may have mutually opposite indirect effects on delinquency. For example, the parents' degree of identification with Hispanic culture could influence how children are socialized, and the values they instill. Hispanic-oriented parents may be more likely to emphasize loyalty to the family and unquestioning respect for parents. Children from traditionally-oriented families may have more attachment to and interaction with their families, and thus, fewer bonds to delinquent peers. Ethnic pride may act as a protector against delinquency by increasing adolescents' self-esteem, which has been associated with low delinquency. Traditionally-oriented or first-generation parents, by de-emphasizing the value of education and hard work as a way of getting ahead, may have lower aspirations for their children, thereby reducing their children's strain between economic aspirations and expectations, and thus indirectly lowering delinquency.

Other dimensions of acculturation may indirectly increase delinquency. According to Padilla (66), Puerto Ricans residing in New York City classify themselves into three groups: long-time residents of New York City; those who grew up there; and recent immigrants. It is

believed that traditional forms of family life break down for New York residents and the difficulties that this imposes are greatest for first-generation or recent-immigrant parents. As emphasized in social control theory, parents better able to monitor and discipline their children's behavior should be more successful at preventing or limiting delinquency by their consistency in supervising their children's behavior and by instilling more family cohesiveness. Disparities in the level of acculturation between parents and children may be related to success of parental control. Disparities are likely to occur between first-generation parents and second-generation children, because the children are more likely to be exposed to influences of U.S. culture and society in school and through the mass media. Unacculturated families may lack knowledge of accepted behavioral norms in the United States and thus will be less likely to adequately socialize their children, thereby affecting the strength of family and school bonds. Thus, acculturation may indirectly influence the delinquent behavior of Hispanic adolescents by its effects on the parents' ability to adequately socialize their children.

Summary

In this review, we sought to show the applicability of different theoretical traditions to the study of Hispanic delinquency. We have indicated that recent research integrating several perspectives within the social control model emphasizes the importance of conventional sources of control like the family and the school in combination with delinquent peer influences which weaken conventional control. In this perspective, delinquency is controlled by emotional attachments to and fear of sanctions from adult authority sources; and this control is counterbalanced by pressures to sanction and engage in delinquency by peers who themselves engage in delinquency. We argue that these control mechanisms may operate in a different fashion among Hispanic youth. Among those who come from unconventional, "street-oriented" families, the influence of peers — delinquent or non-delinquent — may be less significant in producing delinquency than the family's influence. Among those from conventional families, interaction with delinquent peers may also be dictated by reasons of protection from violence and theft or for reasons of solidarity with neighborhood youth. Factors other than the informal pressures of family and youth may influence the delinquent behavior of Hispanic youth. The extent of social disorganization in the neighborhood may adversely affect the ability of adults to control the behavior of adolescents. Other adults who are engaged in illegal activities may provide a climate of acceptance or inevitability of delinquency to some youth who in other contexts might be restrained from delinquent behavior. The stratified opportunity structure model suggests other interrelations. Among those experiencing strain between economic expectations and aspirations, bonds to the family and school may be expected to weaken, thus increasing the possibility of delinquent involvement. In addition, the mere fact of disadvantaged placement in an economic structure may have direct effects on delinquency, especially among older adolescents.

Our discussion also points to the importance of formal social control exerted by arrest and court involvement. An increased police presence in neighborhoods, combined with stronger sanctions in juvenile court may deter adolescents from engaging in delinquency. But this hypothesis rests upon the unproven assumption that arrest rates reflect "real" crime rates. An alternative explanation, worth considering in future research, is the possibility that differences in arrest rates between black and Hispanic youth may reflect differential arrest decisions on the part of police. It must be emphasized that police decisions help to shape the social reality of crime. The structure of opportunity model also suggests that delinquency may be more likely to be reduced by increasing the rewards for conventional behavior through increased job and educational opportunities, than by increasing the sanctions for illegal behavior.

Finally, we argue for the importance of acculturation in any explanation of Hispanic delinquency. Hispanic families that are not assimilated into U.S. society may reduce their children's strain by helping to lower their economic aspirations and expectations, thus indirectly restraining their delinquent behavior. On the other hand, differences in acculturation between immigrant parents and first-generation children may reduce the latter's attachment to the family and increase their attachment to peers, where delinquent orientations may be adopted.

Two research needs seem clear from our conceptual discussion. The first is that very little is known about Hispanic delinquency in general, and about those factors that may influence Hispanic delinquent behavior. Therefore, research to remedy the lack of attention in the delinquency literature to one of the youngest minorities in the United States is long overdue. Second, we believe that research on those factors associated with Hispanic delinquency will help in the understanding and treatment of other at-risk minority youth in the United States. We hope that this conceptual discussion will help in promoting research on all Hispanic populations by social scientists and policy makers.

REFERENCES

1. Wolfgang, M., Figlio, R. and Sellin, T. *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

2. Elliott, D.S. and Voss, H.L. *Delinquency and Dropout.* Toronto: D.C. Heath, 1974.

   Gold, M. *Status Forces in Delinquent Boys.* Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, 1963.

   Glueck, S. and Glueck, E. *Delinquency and Nondelinquency in Perspective.* Boston: Harvard University Press, 1968.

   McCord, W. and McCord, J. *Origins of Crime.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.

   Wolfgang et al., Note 1.

3. Aiken, T.W. Behavior Analysis of Non-Delinquent Invulnerable Adolescents from a High Juvenile Crime Community by Way of Experimental Sampling. Ph.D. dissertation, Faculty of the Graduate School, University of Southern California, 1981.

   Moore, J. *Homeboys.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978.

   Scharff, J. Free Enterprise and the Ghetto Family. *Psychology Today,* March 1981.

4. Hippler, A. *Hunters Point.* New York: Basic Books, 1974.

   McCord, W., Howard, J., Friedberg, B. and Harwood, E. *Life Styles in the Black Ghetto.* New York: Morton, 1969

   Mancini, J. *Strategic Styles: Coping in the Inner City.* New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1981.

   Rosenthal, R., Bruce B., Dunne, F. and Ladd, F. *Different Strokes: Pathways to Maturity in the Boston Ghetto.* Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1976.

5. Aiken, Note 3.

6. Mancini, Note 4.

7. Dembo, R., Allen N. and Vettes, H. The Non-Delinquent in a High Crime Area: Theoretical and Research Perspectives. Paper presented at the

Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Toronto, 1982.

8. Elliott, D., Huizinga, D. and Ageton, S. *Explaining Delinquency and Drug Use.* National Youth Survey Project, Report No. 21. Boulder, Colorado: Behavioral Research Institute, 1982.

9. Cloward, R. and Ohlin L. *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs.* New York: The Free Press, 1960.

10. Kornhauser, R.R. *Social Sources of Delinquency.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

11. Berlin, I. The Economic Approach to Crime: A Preliminary Assessment. Chapter 1 in Messinger, S. and Bitner, E. (eds.), *Criminology Review Yearbook*, vol. 1. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979.

12. Johnson R. *Juvenile Delinquency and Its Origins.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
Loeber, R. and Dishion, T. Early Predictors of Male Delinquency: A Review. *Psychological Bulletin* 94:68-99, 1983.

Reckless, W., Dinitz, S. and Murray, E. Self-Concept as an Insulator against Delinquency. *American Sociological Review* 22:744-746, 1956.

13. Hirschi, T. *Causes of Delinquency.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

14. Sutherland, E. *Principles of Criminology.* Philadelphia: J.E. Lippincott, 1947.

Shaw, C. and McKay, H. *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942.

Thrasher, F. *The Gang.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927.

15. Bodura, D. Theories of Group Delinquency. *Sociological Inquiry* 32:245-260, 1962.

Erickson, M. The Group Context of Delinquent Behavior. *Social Problems* 19:114-129, 1972.

Klein, M. (ed.) *Juvenile Gangs in Context.* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967.

16. Hindelang, M. The Commitment of Delinquents to Their Misdeeds: Do Delinquents Drift? *Social Problems* 17:502-509, 1970.

Elliot and Voss, Note 2.

Elliott, et al., Note 8.

Wiatrowski, M. et al. Social Control Theory and Delinquency. *American Sociological Review* 46:525-541, 1981.

17. Sykes, G. and Matza, D. Techniques of Neutralization. *American Sociological Review* 22, 1957.

18. Elliott et al., Note 8.

19. Moore, J., Diego, V. and Garcia, R. Residence and Territoriality in Chicano Gangs. *Social Problems* 31:182-194, 1983.

20. See Erickson (Note 15); Matza, D., *Delinquency and Drift,* New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964; and Yablonsky, L. The Delinquent Gang as a "Near Group," *Social Problems* 7:108-117, 1959, for three conflicting interpretations; and Bodura (Note 15) for an overview.

21. Miller, W. Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency. *Journal of Social Issues* 14 (3):5-19, 1958.

22. Cohen, A. *Delinquent Boys.* New York: Free Press, 1955.

23. Cloward and Ohlin, Note 9.

24. Thrasher, Note 14.

25. Lerman, P. Gangs, Networks and Subcultural Delinquency. *American Journal of Sociology* 73:63-72 1967.

Erickson, M. and Empey, L. Court Records, Undetected Delinquency and Decision Making. *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science* 54:456-469, 1963.

26. Yablonsky, Note 20.

27. Padilla, E. *Up From Puerto Rico.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1958, p. 224.

28. Elliott et al., Note 8.

29. Merton, R. Social Structure and Anomie, in Merton, R. (ed.), *Social Theory and Social Structure,* New York: The Free Press, 1968.

30. Cloward and Ohlin, Note 9.

31. Carroll, L. and Jackson, P. Inequality, Opportunity and Crime Rates in Central Cities. *Criminology* 21:178-194, 1983.

Currie, E. Crime and Ideology, *Working Papers.* Spring 26-35. Sup. 17-25, 1982.

Blau, P. and Blau, J. The Costs of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime. *American Sociological Review* 47:1114-1129, 1982.

32. Strassberg, P. *Violent Delinquents.* New York: Monarch Books, 1978.

33. Wolfgang, Figlic, and Sellin, Note 1.

Wolfgang, M., Figlio, R. and Sellin, T. Delinquency in Two Birth Cohorts. *American Behavioral Scientist* 27:75-86, 1983.

34. Elliott et al., Note 8.

35. Cohen, Note 22.

36. Elliott et al., Note 8.

37. Rivera, R. and Short, J., Jr. Significant Adults, Caretakers, and Structures of Opportunity: An Exploratory Study. In J. Short, Jr. (ed.), *Gang Delinquency and Delinquent Subcultures.* New York: Harper and Row, 1968, pp. 209-243.

38. David Greenberg, personal communication, 1984.

39. Miller, S.M. The American Lower Classes. In Riessman et al. (eds.), *Mental Health of the Poor.* pp. 139-154.

40. Gordon, D. *Theories of Poverty and Underemployment.* Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1972.

Thompson, J., Sviridoff, M., McElroy, Jr. et al. *Employment and Crime Relationships: A Review of Theories and Research.* New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 1980.

Smith, M. and Thompson, J. *Employment, Youth, and Violent Crime.* New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 1983.

41. Davis, J. The Relation Between Crime and Unemployment: An Econometric Model. Unpublished paper, 1983.

42. Thompson et al., Note 40.

Smith and Thompson, Note 40.

43. Elliott and Voss, Note 2.

44. Smith and Thompson, Note 40.

45. Cloward and Ohlin, Note 9.

46. Ianni, F.
Black Mafia. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974

47. Schoenberg, S.
Criteria for the Evaluation of Neighborhood Viability in Working Class and Low Income Areas in Central Cities. *Social Problems* 27:69-78, 1979.

48. Glassner, B., Johnson, B., Ksander, M. and Berg B.
A Deterrent Effect of Juvenile Delinquency V. Adult Jurisdiction. Unpublished paper, 1983.

49. Estimated from data compiled for Rodriguez, Burger, and Banks article in this issue of the HRC *Research Bulletin.*

50. Wolfgang et al., Note 1.

51. Briar, S. and Piliavin, I.
Delinquency, Situational Inducements and Commitments to Conformity. *Social Problems* 13:35-45, 1965.

Skolnick, J.
Justice Without Trial. New York: John Wiley, 1967.

Black, D.
The Social Organization of Arrest. *Stanford Law Review* 23:1087-1111, 1971.

52. Thompson et al., Note 40.

53. U.S. Department of Justice
FBI Uniform Crime Reports, 1980. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981.

54. Kelman, M.
The Origins of Crime and Criminal Violence. In D. Kairys (ed.), *The Politics of Law. New York: Pantheon, 1983.*

Miller. Note 39.

Smith and Thompson, Note 40.

55. Suttles, G.
The Social Order of the Slum. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968.

Anderson, E.
A Place in the Corner. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976.

Schoenberg, Note 7.

Sampson, R.
Structural Density and Criminal Victimization. *Criminology* 21:276-293, 1983.

56. Suttles, Note 55.

57. Elliott et al., Note 8.

58. Whyte, W.
Street Corner Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927.

59. *Liebow, E.*
Tally's Corner. Boston: Little Brown, 1967,

60. Anderson, Note 55.

61. Rogg, E. and Cooney, R.
Adaptation and Adjustment of Cubans: West New York, New Jersey. Monograph No. 5. New York: Hispanic Research Center, Fordham University, 1980.

62. Schoenberg, Note 47.

63. Suttles, Note 55.

64. Sellin, T.
Culture Conflict and Crime. A Report of the Subcommittee on Delinquency of the Committee on Personality and Culture. New York: Social Science Research Council, 1938.

Thomas, W.I.
Unadjusted Girls with Cases and Standpoint for Behavior Analysis. Montclair, N.J.: Patterson-Smith, 1969.

Znaniecki, F. and Thomas W.I.
The Polish Peasant in Europe and America. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1927.

65. Berry, J.
Acculturation as Varieties of Adaptation. Chapter 1 in Padilla, A. (ed.), *Acculturation, Theory, Models and Some New Findings.* Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980.

66. Padilla, Note 27.